

SHERIFF

Policy Item #3 – Sheriff's Detectives /Transcriber Typists

In 2001, over 48,000 children were reported to the San Bernardino County Department of Children's Services Hotline as the victims of some type of abuse.

In 2001, new laws and court decisions required law enforcement to investigate each "emergency response referral" from the Department of Children's Services. A referral committee, made up of members of the District Attorney's Office, Probation and Children Services, was formed to come up with options on how each referral could be handled. The committee came up with three options. Of the three options, the committee agreed that the best option was to increase the size of the Crimes Against Children Detail. It was an innovative approach that would have allowed for a Crimes Against Children Detective to be the first responder to child sexual abuse cases. The law requires special training to investigate abuse cases and deletes patrol deputies from the investigations, thus allowing for a highly trained detective to conduct the investigation in its entirety.

Child abuse investigations are more complex than they were ten years ago. Child abuse investigators must now follow the County Child Abuse Protocol. The County Child Abuse Protocol sets strict guidelines in how a child abuse investigation should be investigated. This aids in successful investigations, but, oftentimes, it will slow the investigation. As per the County Child Abuse Protocol, child abuse victims must have a forensic interview conducted at the Children's Assessment Center and, when needed, a forensic medical examination. Investigations can be slow because a detective must schedule interviews and medical examinations with a very overloaded Children's Assessment Center, which operates Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Because of the complexity of child abuse investigations and with the added requirements of the County Child Abuse Protocol, child abuse investigations are out of the realm and expertise of patrol deputies. They require a committed and specially trained detective.

Investigators have a new tool in Evidence Code 1108(a). If a suspect has a prior arrest or was a suspect in a prior sexual abuse case, Evidence code 1108(a) allows for the past cases to be used as corroboration in the new case. This can almost double the amount of work, as the investigator must locate and re-interview the suspect's past victims to prepare the new case for trial, as the past victims will testify in the new case.

Members of the Crimes Against Children Detail train officers in the investigation of child abuse. This training is conducted three times a year at the Sheriff's Basic Academy. A 40-hour class is taught two times a year at the Advanced Officers' Training Center at Glen Helen North.

Convicted sex offenders must register for life as sex offenders. In the Sheriff's jurisdiction, there are over 1,600 registered sex offenders. It is a proven fact sex offenders re-offend. Over 800 of the registered sex offenders in the Sheriff's jurisdiction are out of compliance. This information is from the California Department of Justice. The Crimes Against Children Detail does not have the resources to conduct compliance checks or investigate sex offenders who are out of compliance.

The increase in the number of cases being investigated has risen during the last ten years. The real burden on the division has occurred through the mandated legal requirements of investigating a child abuse case.

Investigations have become very complex and time consuming. The staffing level of the Crimes Against Children Detail has remained the same for the last ten years.

We are requesting \$356,800 to fund the additional detectives and clerical support to assist with child abuse cases that occur within the entire Sheriff's Department's jurisdiction.